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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (09/17): Negative reporting about
Special Envoy Mitchell's Meetings

Main Stories:

The local press leads with stories calling Special Envoy George Mitchell's meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a failure. The coverage notes that Mitchell did not reach an agreement with Netanyahu during their meeting yesterday and that they will continue discussions tomorrow. The reports question the possibility of a meeting in New York between Netanyahu, President Obama and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Al-Hayat Al Jadida quotes Netanyahu saying "No arrangements for a tri-lateral meeting were made, and I've decided to cut short my visit to New York." Netanyahu also stated that Israel will never withdraw to the 1967 borders, according to coverage.

The three dailies run coverage of Israel's announcement that they will remove 100 dirt barriers in the West Bank. Reports quote an Israeli military official claiming that this step is part of the ongoing efforts to improve the West Bank economy. The dailies note that the UN estimates there are over 600 obstacles in the West Bank.

The dailies report that over 300,000 Palestinians prayed at Al Aqsa Mosque last night ("Laylat al-Qadr" - "Night of Destiny"). The reports note that this huge number of people who turned out despite Israeli restrictions on who can enter Jerusalem from the West Bank demonstrates the importance of Al-Aqsa Mosque to Palestinians.

In continued coverage of the UN report on Israeli and Hamas actions during the recent conflict in Gaza, all three dailies note that Washington has some "concerns" about the report's recommendations and noted Israel's campaign to counter the report's findings.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) In the Column "Hadeeth Al-Quds" (Jerusalem Talk) in Al-Quds independent daily under the title "War Crimes since Sabra and Shatila: We Want the Criminals to Be Put on Trial" (09/17): "The meetings of U.S. Special Envoy George Mitchell and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu reached the stalemate that Netanyahu has been planning for ... The Arab states, Palestinians and the international community wonder if President Obama is unable to achieve a temporary freeze of settlement activities, how will he achieve a peace agreement, which must include the removal of settlements?"

2) Omar Al-Ghoul opines in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida independent daily under the headline "Who Is More Obstinate than Netanyahu?" (09/17): "Modern history has not seen a conflict as ugly as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for several reasons. One is the complexity of the settlements. Israel's leaders have exceeded the limits of logic with its immoral actions. There's a saying that applies to the situation that says "we accepted the oppression but the oppression didn't accept us."

RUBINSTEIN